

Debate:
Imam Abu Hanifah and the Atheist

Long ago in the city of Baghdad, there was a Muslim empire. On one side of the River Tigris were the royal palaces and on the other side was the city. The Muslims were gathered in the Royal Palace when an atheist approached them. He said to them, 'I don't believe in God, there cannot be a God, you cannot hear Him or see Him, you're wasting your time! Bring me your best debator and I will debate this issue with him.'

The best debator at the time was Imam Abu Hanifah Rahimullah. A messenger from amongst the Muslims was sent over the River Tigris to the city, where Abu Hanifah Rahimullah was, in order to tell him about the atheist who was awaiting him. On crossing the River Tigris, the messenger conveyed the message to Abu Hanifah Rahimullah saying, 'Oh Abu Hanifah, an atheist is waiting for you, to debate you, please come!' Abu Hanifah Rahimullah told the messenger that he would be on his way.

The messenger went over the River Tigris once again and to the Royal Palaces, where everyone including the atheist awaited the arrival of Abu Hanifah Rahimullah. It was sunset at the time and one hour had passed, but Abu Hanifah Rahimullah still hadn't arrived. Another hour had passed, but still there was no sign of him. The Muslims started to become tense and worried about his late arrival. They did not want the atheist to think that they were too scared to debate him, yet they did not want to take up the challenge themselves as Abu Hanifah Rahimullah was the best of Debators from amongst the Muslims. Another hour passed, and suddenly the atheist started laughing and said, 'Your best debator is too scared! He knows he's wrong, he is too frightened to come and debate with me. I gurantee he will not turn up today.'

The Muslims increased in apprehension and eventually it had passed midnight, and the atheist had a smile on his face. The clock ticked on, and finally Abu Hanifah Rahimullah had arrived. The Muslims inquired about his lateness and remarked, 'Oh Abu Hanifah, a messenger sent for you hours ago, and you arrive now, explain your lateness to us.'

Abu Hanifah Rahimullah apologises for his lateness and begins to explain, while the atheist listens to his story.

'Once the messenger delivered the message to me, I began to make my way to the River Tigris, and on reaching the river bank I realised there was no boat, in order to cross the river. It was getting dark, and I looked around, there was no boat anywhere nor was there a navigator or a sailor in order for me to cross the river to get to the Royal Palaces. I continued to look around for a boat, as I did not want the atheist to think I was running away and did not want to debate with him.

I was standing on the river bank looking for a navigator or a boat when something caught my attention in the middle of the river. I looked forward, and to my amazement I saw planks of wood rising to the surface from the sea bed. I was shocked, amazed, I couldn't believe what I saw seeing. Ready made planks of wood were rising up to the surface and joining together. They were all the same width and length, I was astounded at what I saw.

I continued to look into the middle of the river, and then I saw nails coming up from the sea floor. They positioned themselves onto the boat and held the planks together, without them being banged. I stood in amazement and thought to myself, 'Oh Allah, how can this happen, planks of wood rising to the surface by itself, and then nails positioning

themselves onto the boat without being banged?' I could not understand what was happening before my eyes.'

The atheist meanwhile was listening with a smile on his face. Abu Hanifah Rahimullah continued, 'I was still standing on the river bank watching these planks of wood join together with nails. I could see water seeping through the gaps in the wood, and suddenly I saw a sealant appear from the river and it began sealing the gaps without someone having poured it, again I thought, 'Ya Allah, how is this possible, how can sealant appear and seal the gaps without someone having poured it, and nails appear without someone having banged them.' I looked closer and I could see a boat forming before my eyes, I stood in amazement and was filled with shock. All of a sudden a sail appeared and I thought to myself, 'How is this happening, a boat has appeared before my eyes by itself, planks of wood, nails, sealant and now a sail, but how can I use this boat in order to cross the river to the Royal Palaces?' I stood staring in wonderment and suddenly the boat began to move. It came towards me against the current. It stood floating beside me while I was on the river bank, as if telling me to embark onto it. I went on the boat and yet again it began to move. There was no navigator or sailor on the boat, and the boat began to travel towards the direction of the royal palaces, without anyone having programmed it as to where to go. I could not understand what was happening, and how this boat had formed and was taking me to my destination against the flow of water. The boat eventually reached the other side of the River Tigris and I disembarked. I turned around and the boat had disappeared, and that is why I am late.'

At this moment, the atheist burst out laughing and remarked, 'Oh Abu Hanifah, I heard that you were the best debator from amongst the Muslims, I heard that you were the wisest, the most knowledgeable from amongst your people. From seeing you today, I can say that you show none of these qualities. You speak of a boat appearing from nowhere, without someone having built it. Nails positioning themselves without someone having banged them, sealant being poured without someone having poured it, and the boat taking you to your destination without a navigator against the tide, your taking childish, your talking ridiculous, I swear I do not believe a word of it!'

Abu Hanifah Rahimullah turned to the atheist and replied, 'You don't believe a word of it? You don't believe that nails can appear by themselves? You don't believe sealant can be poured by itself? You don't believe that a boat can move without a navigator, hence you don't believe that a boat can appear without a boat maker?'

The atheist remarked defiantly, 'Yes I don't believe a word of it!'

Abu Hanifah Rahimullah replied, 'If you cannot believe that a boat came into being without a boat maker, than this is only a boat, how can you believe that the whole world, the universe, the stars, the oceans, and the planets came into being without a creator?'

The atheist astonished at his reply got up and fled